

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN FOR AFFORDABLE AND FAIR HOUSING

The following Plan has been incorporated and approved as part of Fiscal Year 2005 to 2009 Strategic Plan for the City of Lincoln, which presents how the City will spend federal CDBG, HOME, and ADDI funds over the next five years. The Plan offers goals, objectives, strategies, and activities that will guide the use of funds to further affordable and fair housing in the City of Lincoln. While the activities are specific to the Urban Development Department's use of funds, the Goals and Objectives should serve as a guide for the City's housing industry. Additionally, the implementation of the housing strategies and activities will require partnerships with other City departments, non-profits, for-profit organizations (including Realtors, landlords, developers, and property managers), neighborhoods, and others in the housing industry.

Conformance with the Comprehensive Plan

In developing the Plan, care was taken to ensure that the goals, objectives, strategies, and activities not only conformed with HUD objectives, but the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Above all, stakeholders involved in the AHNA emphasized that local planning policy and actions by officials and staff should reflect that the development and maintenance of affordable housing is a priority of the City. The 2025 Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2002, sets the tone for the preservation and development of affordable housing in the City of Lincoln. The overall guiding principles for affordable housing are as follows:

Affordable housing should be distributed throughout the region to be near job opportunities and to provide housing choices within every neighborhood. Preserve existing affordable housing and promote the creation of new affordable housing throughout the community.

One of Lincoln's most valuable community assets is the supply of good, safe, and decent single family homes that are available at very affordable costs when compared to many other communities across the country. Preservation of these homes for use by future generations will protect residential neighborhoods and allow for many households to attain the dream of home ownership.

A safe residential dwelling should be available for each citizen: the efficiency apartment and the country estate, the small single family "starter" home and the large downtown apartment suite, the most affordable and the most expensive dwelling unit, completely independent living and living within the care of others. Provision of the broadest range of housing options throughout the community improves the quality of life in the whole community.

Yet this diversity of housing choices directly depends upon achieving affordable housing. Housing affordability is not merely important for the community, it is imperative. Lack of affordable housing directly impacts citizens' assets and opportunities, which in turn shape the community's assets and opportunities. Failure to achieve housing affordability reduces the quality of life for income groups disproportionately, creates widespread hardships and stress, and retards the City's collective abilities to address community problems and objectives.

The Comprehensive Plan further outlines guiding principles for the future state of residential areas, including discouraging new residential development in environmentally sensitive areas,

providing different housing types to meet the needs of a diversifying population, proving access to neighborhood services, creating housing opportunities for persons with special needs, and providing alternatives to automobile transportation.

The Plan provides additional guidance for new neighborhoods, encouraging a mix of housing types with access to services, and a compatibility of uses. Principles for existing neighborhoods include the preservation, maintenance, and renovation of existing housing, particularly in the low-to-moderate income neighborhoods; the promotion of historical and architectural character of neighborhoods; and, the protection of occupants through building code requirements for rehabilitation that recognize the need for flexibility.

Strategies are also offered within the Comprehensive Plan to address affordable housing concerns. When appropriate, these strategies are included in the five-year plan. Additionally, the plan suggests ways to further meet the need for affordable housing withing the City.

Vision

Within the next 20 years, the City of Lincoln will have enough affordable housing to meet the needs of all low-income households, including those with extremely low and very low incomes; the current owner and renter affordable housing stock will have been maintained and improved; homeownership opportunities will be available to those households who make at least 30 percent of the median household income, with balanced rates of homeownership throughout the City; barriers to affordable housing will have been removed to provide the proper balance between housing opportunity, quality, and safety; existing neighborhoods will have been enhanced through the preservation of the existing housing stock, enhancement of homeownership, and encouragement of racial, ethnic, and economic diversity; households will have the capacity to become self-sufficient in rental and homeownership through the provision of a wide range of educational resources and supportive services; and all persons will have equal access to affordable housing regardless of their race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, familial status, age, disability, sexual orientation, etc.

Five-Year Plan

Goal 1 ***Preserve and Provide for Safe and Decent Affordable Housing: Promote the preservation and revitalization of affordable housing and rehabilitation of substandard or inadequate housing throughout the City with emphasis on the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) and low-income areas.***

Objective 1: Ensure that there will be an adequate supply of affordable rental housing that meets at least minimum housing quality standards for households making 0 to 80 percent of the median income over the next five years by providing a range of financial and technical resources to rehabilitate the existing rental housing stock which carry long-term affordability.

Strategy 1: Provide a range of financial and technical resources to rehabilitate the existing renter-occupied housing stock with emphasis on the NRSA and low-income areas.

Activity: Use the Housing Development Loan Program (HDLP) to assist non-profits in providing for the special needs population with the rehabilitation of facilities.

Activity: Use the Housing Development Loan Program to assist non-profit landlords to sustain long-term affordability for tenants under 30% of median income and projects with expiring Low-Income Housing Tax Credits.

Activity: Work with the various housing non-profits and neighborhood organizations to instill pride in the neighborhoods and increase awareness of the financial and technical resources available for rehabilitation.

Objective 2: Encourage private investment in housing preservation and rehabilitation

Strategy 1: Develop a task force to explore the use of innovative means to encourage the preservation of existing affordable housing, including a housing rehabilitation sub-code, tax credits, tax abatement, land banking, public/private partnerships, etc., and recommend those means to the Mayor and City Council.

Strategy 2: Allow the market trend to encourage the deconversion of rental properties in the older neighborhoods through the sale to owner-occupied buyers.

Objective 3: Improve the overall quality of housing in the NRSA and maintain the overall quality in the Low- to Moderate-Income (LMI) area.

Strategy 1: Provide a range of financial and technical resources to rehabilitate the existing owner-occupied housing stock.

Activity: Continue to fund PRIDE (Promote Residential Improvement Design and Enhancement) Program which grants homeowners in eleven older neighborhoods up to \$600 for material-only exterior repair limited to the NRSA.

Activity: Continue to fund low-income homeowners not eligible for conventional loans through Direct or Deferred Loan Program in LMI area.

Activity: Continue to fund the HILP program, which in cooperation with NIFA and six private lenders, make available 0 percent loans to low-to-moderate income owners for rehabilitation of their homes.

Strategy 2: Continue to provide additional financial incentives to first-time homebuyers who buy and rehabilitate houses in the NRSA and LMI.

Activity: Continue First Home Program with downpayment and rehabilitation assistance with a 0 percent interest loan (forgivable in the NRSA and half-forgivable within the LMI).

Strategy 3: Increase awareness of the financial and technical resources available for rehabilitation among the public and housing providers.

Activity: Market existing housing programs with emphasis on the NRSA and LMI areas and low-income, minority households.

Objective 4: Improve the health and well-being of low-income households throughout the City by increasing awareness of and reduce exposure to lead-based paint in homes, especially those with children.

Strategy 1: Continue to use lead-based paint certified housing staff to inform and educate housing clients, non-profit agencies, and the private sector housing industry.

Strategy 2: Increase awareness of the financial and technical resources available for household hazard mitigation, including the remediation of lead-based paint, mold, etc.

Goal 2 - Create and Sustain Homeownership Opportunities: Increase opportunities for homeownership by those households who make 30 to 80 percent of the median income and assist low-income households in sustaining their homeownership status.

Objective 1: Assist low-income households in building wealth and maintaining equity by providing a range of financial and technical resources to enable low-income households to purchase and maintain a home.

Strategy 1: Develop and enhance existing financial education programs for renters not yet ready to become first-time homebuyers, first-time homebuyers, and existing low-income homeowners.

Activity: Provide technical support to Neighborhoods, Inc., Lincoln Action Program, the Realtors Association of Lincoln, local banks, and others in the development, enhancement, and provision of basic financial skills training programs.

Activity: Develop and implement the BRIDGE (Bridging Referral and Informational Demand Gaps) program which offers technical assistance and information to current homeowners regarding predatory lending, credit card debt, and equity depletion.

Activity: Continue to fund First Time Homebuyer training programs through partnership with Neighborhoods, Inc. and Lincoln Action Program (for trainings in languages other than English).

Strategy 2: Provide financial assistance to enable first-time homebuyers to purchase a home.

Activity: Continue the First Home Program administered by Neighborhoods, Inc.

Activity: Continue partnering with and leveraging funds for additional homebuyer programs of other agencies, including NIFA, LAP and LHA

Strategy 3: Continue to partner with non-profit housing partners to create new affordable homeownership opportunities throughout the City by building affordable homes in infill lots and in new developments, and substantially rehabilitating dilapidated units.

Activity: Leverage funds in conjunction with Neighborhoods Inc. using the Troubled Property Program for infill housing.

Activity: Continue to partner with Neighborhoods, Inc. to develop affordable and mixed-income housing projects as part of the community revitalization portion of the Antelope Valley project.

Activity: Continue to partner with Nebraska Housing Resource for the construction of new affordable housing in higher income areas.

Activity: Continue the incentives under the First Home Program for purchase in the NRSA and the LMI areas.

Strategy 4: Continue to assist low-income homeowners in maintaining and rehabilitating their homes.

Activity: Continue to fund the HILP program, which in cooperation with NIFA and six private lenders, make available 0 percent loans to low-to-moderate income owners for rehabilitation of their homes city-wide.

Activity: Continue to fund low-income homeowners not eligible for conventional loans through Direct or Deferred Loan Program in LMI area.

Activity: Continue to provide PRIDE grants for limited exterior improvements in NRSA.

Strategy 5: Continue to share information with housing providers and provide informational brochures on a wide range of home ownership topics.

Objective 2: Increase the rate of homeownership within the NRSA

Strategy 1: Provide additional incentives to enable low-income households to purchase a home within the NRSA.

Activity: Continue the First Home Program (with total forgiveness loan in the NRSA) and homebuyer training administered by Neighborhoods Inc.

Strategy 2: Create additional homeownership opportunities in the NRSA.

Activity: Continue Troubled Property Program administered by Neighborhoods Inc. for infill housing.

Activity: Continue to partner with Neighborhoods, Inc. and developers to develop affordable and mixed-income housing projects as part of the community revitalization portion of the Antelope Valley project.

Activity: Examine innovative ways to encourage absentee landlords and owners in unstable housing situations to sell properties to owner occupants.

Strategy 3: Market the NRSA as an attractive and affordable place to live.

Activity: Continue the "Heart of Lincoln" program to promote homeownership in older neighborhoods.

Objective 3: Increase the rate of homeownership among households headed by persons who are racial and/or ethnic minorities.

Strategy 1: Provide a range of technical resources, including housing program brochures and trainings, from Urban Development and other Departments in other languages including, but not limited to, Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, Arabic, and Neur in addition to English.

Activity: Partner with the Lincoln Action Program to teach the basic financial skills and homebuyer classes in other languages.

Strategy 2: Continue the function of the Minority Marketing Committee to implement the Minority Marketing Plan.

Activity: Create additional partnerships with advocacy organizations for racial and ethnic minorities.

Activity: Conduct focus groups to understand the specific housing needs and barriers to home buying for specific subpopulations.

Strategy 3: Continue to access the specific skills of Urban Development's bilingual staff members and bilingual staff members of other agencies when language barriers are an issue.

Objective 4: Assist low-income homeowners in sustaining their homeownership status during emergency situations and reduce the overall instances of emergency situations.

Strategy 1: Provide technical and financial resources to prevent emergency situations and maintain household stability.

Activity: Develop and implement the BRIDGE (Bridging Referral and Informational Demand Gaps) program which offers technical assistance and information to current homeowners regarding predatory lending, credit card debt, and equity depletion.

Activity: Work with other City departments and agencies to address housing situations that are perilous or may be perilous in the future due to insufficient regulations (i.e., mobile home parks).

Activity: Continue to partner with Rebuilding Together through the HEART (Helping Elderly Access Rebuilding Together) Program.

Strategy 2: Provide technical and financial resources to address existing emergency situations.

Activity: Continue the Emergency Loan Program.

Activity: Create a referral network through partnerships with other agencies by establishing the BRIDGE Program (Bridging Referral and Informational Demand Gaps). Educate staff on other agencies, improve our referral network and provide clients and potential clients with information and technical assistance to sustain and improve their household status. Housing Rehabilitation Specialists will offer their technical assistance to potential clients to provide the most cost effective way of addressing needs.

Objective 5: Promote the stability and revitalization of low-income, older neighborhoods.

Strategy 1: Strengthen partnerships between the Housing Department and other entities to incorporate the housing element and homeownership goals into revitalization planning.

Activity: Partner with the Lincoln Action Program on the "Free to Grow" project.

Activity: Expand the partnership with Neighborhoods, Inc. to address Heart of Lincoln, Antelope Valley, and the Troubled Property Program.

Activity: Work with the City partners on the community revitalization portion of the Antelope Valley project.

Strategy 2: Strengthen partnerships to improve housing as part of the overall redevelopment process in older neighborhoods.

Activity: Partner with Habitat for Humanity, LHA, and other non-profit home builders to identify vacant infill lots for new construction projects.

Activity: Partner with Neighborhood Associations and other organizations to identify problem properties and star properties (as best practices examples).

Goal 3 - Create and Sustain Affordable Rental Housing Opportunities: Improve access to permanent, affordable rental housing with appropriate supportive services by low-income households, and assist rental households in maintaining their rental status or move to homeownership, as appropriate.

Objective 1: Increase the sustainability and stability of households in rental housing situations.

Strategy 1: Help maintain the long-term affordability of units under non-profit ownership and projects with expiring tax credits

Activity: Use the HDLP Program to fund rehabilitation of Tax Credit properties.

Strategy 2: Build the capacity of renter household to maintain their rental status during emergency situations.

Activity: Educate consumers on emergency sources of funding.

Activity: Provide basic financial skills training to renters and those in transitional housing.

Strategy 3: Assist in maintaining rental subsidies for low-income renters.

Activity: Continue to provide security deposit assistance for Lincoln Housing Authority.

Objective 2: Create permanent housing options for low-income persons with special needs, including those with disabilities and/or needs for supportive services by continuing to work with special needs providers in combination with other public/private resources to create new housing or rehabilitate existing housing for the special needs population.

Strategy 1: Assist non-profits and for-profit developers in providing for the special needs population with new construction of housing or facilities

Activity: Use the Housing Development Loan Program to finance new housing projects for special needs populations.

Activity: Use the Housing Development Loan Program to assist developers with gap financing for an elderly housing Tax Credit project.

Strategy 2: Assist developers in leveraging funds for supportive services.

Objective 3: Assist qualified renters in making steps toward homeownership.

Strategy 1: Build household capacity to assist qualified renters in becoming homeowners.

Activity: Establish a "Financial Fitness" program to prepare renters for the next step towards homeownership.

Strategy 2: Build awareness among developers and landlords of NIFA's CROWN program, which would allow renters to set aside a portion of their rent for the purchase of a home, and assist in implementation

Objective 4: Assist homeowners in perilous ownership situations into appropriate rental housing.

Strategy 1: Assist frail elderly homeowners in unsafe housing situation to find permanent housing with supportive services.

Strategy 2: Assist households in dilapidated or unsafe mobile homes into permanent housing situations.

Goal 4 - Remove Barriers to Fair Housing and Affirmatively Further Fair Housing: Create and sustain affordable rental and owner housing opportunities throughout the City for all people, specifically households that may face additional barriers due to their race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, familial status, age, disability, sexual orientation, and use of government assistance.

Objective 1: Provide the City (staff and elected officials) with the necessary tools to remove barriers to fair and affordable housing and affirmatively further fair housing goals.

Strategy 1: Ensure City staff and elected officials have received training in both fair housing law and the benefits of equal access to affordable housing.

Strategy 2: Develop and implement guidelines for the review of new and existing zoning ordinances, regulations, and housing developments to determine if they meet the fair housing test.

Objective 2: Improve access to permanent, affordable rental housing throughout the City with appropriate supportive services by low-income households and assist rental households in maintaining their rental status.

Strategy 1: Continue to fund the removal of physical and architectural barriers in existing rental housing.

Activity: Continue Barrier Removal Program

Objective 3: Increase opportunities for homeownership by those households who make 30 to 80 percent of the median income throughout the City.

Strategy 1: Partner with enforcement agencies, fair housing advocates, and lenders to curb predatory lending practices through enacting appropriate legislation and/or providing continuing education.

Strategy 2: Work with enforcement agencies, REALTORS®, and lenders to assist in implementing a voluntary self-testing program to identify and correct discriminatory lending practices and policies that disparately impact protected classes in the homebuying process.

Strategy 3: Explore and implement innovative means to increase opportunities for immigrants, refugees, persons who are racial and or/ethnic minorities, and other underserved persons to be homebuyers.

Strategy 4: Continue to fund the removal of physical and architectural barriers in exiting owner-occupied housing.

Activity: Continue Barrier Removal Program

Objective 4: Improve and expand the collection and sharing of fair housing and affordable housing information across public and private entities, among housing industry entities, and within the public realm to improve understanding of fair housing laws, encourage reporting of violations, address existing and future housing needs, facilitate implementation of best practices, and reduce discrimination.

Strategy 1: Provide continuing education programs targeted toward housing industry professionals, city staff, special needs subpopulations, clients, and the general public.

Activity: Continue to hold an annual fair housing conference, tailoring the program to meet the informational needs of different segments/sectors of the housing industry each year.

Activity: Continue to hold additional informational sessions to improve understanding of needs and of persons with disabilities, persons of other cultural and religious backgrounds, and persons who speak languages other than or in addition to English.

Strategy 2: Continue to participate on boards and committees of local organizations (public, private, and nonprofit) to share fair housing information.

Strategy 3: Encourage providers of affordable housing and special needs housing to work with neighborhood associations before and during the process of obtaining permits.

Strategy 4: Establish baseline data of existing fair housing indicators (i.e., Home Mortgage Disclosure Act, housing conditions) that can be updated on an annual basis as part of monitoring and evaluation by partnering with organizations that can assist in research and analysis.

Activity: Partner with the University of Nebraska - Lincoln, Public Policy Center to develop a HMDA database and run an analysis of data

Strategy 5: Provide "best practices" examples and design standards as models of affordable housing and special needs housing redevelopment projects that we want to see in the City.

Strategy 6: Continue to work with the media to provide positive examples of households in protected classes and their affordable housing experiences and "best practices" examples of affordable housing programs and developments.

Objective 5: Monitor, evaluate, and update fair housing plans (on an as needed and annual basis as part of the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER)), policies, and programs to ensure that the City is affirmatively furthering fair housing as required by HUD.

Strategy 1: Comply with HUD fair housing requirements by maintaining substantial equivalency and monitoring program compliance.

Activity: Work with Lincoln Commission on Human Rights to monitor compliance of Title 11 of the Lincoln Municipal Code with Federal Fair Housing Law.

Activity: Monitor compliance with affirmatively fair housing market requirements by subrecipients and borrowers.

Activity: Monitor projects using Federal funds to ensure Section 504 regulations are met in the new construction and substantial rehabilitation of residential units.

Strategy 2: Maintain the Urban Development Equal Access Committee and/or use other existing committees for annual monitoring of progress toward making amendments to the Fair Housing Plan.

Strategy 3: Continue to implement and update the "Minority Marketing Plan" for Urban Development Department programs.

- Strategy 4: Develop a set of performance indicators that may be monitored annually and reviewed by the equal access committee.

Goal 5 - Strengthen or Establish Public Policy and Institutions to Support Affordable Housing: Strengthen or establish policies, procedures, and institutions that support and maintain the quality, affordability, and availability of housing for low-income households and preserve and enhance the quality of life in older neighborhoods.

Objective 1: Remove regulatory barriers to affordable housing

- Strategy 1: Create or use an existing task force to examine policy barriers to affordable housing.
- Strategy 2: Develop and implement guidelines for the review of new and existing zoning ordinances, regulations, and housing developments to determine if they meet the affordable housing test.

Objective 2: Improve understanding of housing needs and gaps, and information sharing about needs and gaps among institutions

- Strategy 1: Develop a system for monitoring housing requests/needs across institutions
- Activity: Develop and implement the BRIDGE Program. Educate staff on other agencies, improve our referral network and provide clients and potential clients with information and technical assistance to sustain and improve their household status.
- Strategy 2: Develop additional informational databases and sources alone or in partnership with other agencies or departments.
- Activity: Conduct a housing conditions analysis of rental and owner housing.
- Activity: Maintain a housing indicators database.

Objective 3: Maintain or increase the level of funding available for affordable housing activities in the City of Lincoln

- Strategy 1: Leverage other funding sources and/or affiliate with institutions which are eligible to tap into other funding sources.
- Activity: Continue to apply for the Nebraska Affordable Housing Trust Fund as leverage for housing projects.

- Activity: Continue to work with City funds to develop housing in the Antelope Valley.
- Activity: Continue to work with the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) on Super-Target funds.
- Activity: Continue to work with developers applying for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits through NIFA.